

A Brief Collecting Tour in Malaya, August 1972

By C. G. M. DE WORMS, M.A., Ph.D., F.R.E.S.

The Malay Peninsula is indeed possibly the richest region in south-east Asia for its lepidoptera and in particular for providing some of the most spectacular butterflies that exist. Much has been written about them by various collectors and general naturalists over the years. The most recent account has been that of Mr A. G. Batten in his paper "A month in Malaysia in the footsteps of Corbet and Pendlebury", giving illuminating details of his exploits in February and March 1968 in various parts of the Malayan jungle and other types of terrain (*Ent. Rec.*, **82**: seq.). Fired by this colourful narrative I felt that this wonderful region would be a good stepping stone on my way to attend the 14th International Congress of Entomology to take place in Canberra in August 1972. When Mr Henry Barlow heard of my possible plans, he most kindly invited me to stay a few days with him in Kuala Lumpur where he had been based for some two years.

Accordingly I set out by air on the afternoon of 3rd August and after stops at Damascus, Djoubai and Dacca, I landed just twenty-four hours later local time in this lovely capital of the Federated Malay States. I had a most cordial and warm welcome from my host who motored me through the main parts of this fine city to this villa on the outskirts where I was most lavishly entertained that evening. He expounded to me his ideas for the few days collecting at my disposal and where we were likely to see the choicest species. Early on the morning of the 4th in the cool of the day we set out by car to cover the 40 miles to the capital of the adjoining state of Negri Sembilan. This was Seremban, quite a large town with a distinct colonial appearance about most of its wide streets. After fixing up at the very well-appointed Carlton Hotel run by a Chinese proprietor we joined forces at the local club with Mr Giles Roche who had motored that morning the 250 miles from Singapore. After a break for refreshments we set off in very sultry conditions to a spot in the nearby hills following a very winding route which ended at the Pantai Reservoir where we got permission to collect. As this was the end of the road, we collected up our equipment and went on foot into the edge of the large forest which continued uninterruptedly up the slopes. It was not easy to file along the rather rough path bordering the torrent above the small reservoir. Shortly after we had started along it, we caught sight of our first birdwing, the magnificent black and yellow *Troides helena cerberus* C. & R. Felder, sailing about high up and always somehow just out of reach, even of a long-handled net. We next came across a pair of that shade-loving group of the speckled Danaiids, the large floppy and quite scarce species *Ideopsis hypermnestra* Westwood with its semitransparent winks, having an expanse of almost 7 inches. Various

members of the *Graphium* group of Swallow-tails were dashing about when we returned to the upper end of the reservoir where we saw three *T. helena* flying together and just got a glimpse of a female of Rajah Brooke's birdwing *Trogonoptera brookiana* Wallace with its distinct white streaks on the forewings dashing through the forest canopy. It was a great thrill seeing this monarch of Malayan butterflies for the first time. Later that afternoon we halted by a local river where there were plenty of small Satyrids flying along its banks, mostly *Ypthimas* and a number of skipper species. We returned to Seremban at dusk where we sampled a very good Chinese meal. The next morning of the 6th, a Sunday, Henry Barlow and I again joined forces with Giles Roche and this time went back towards Kuala Lumpur again through groves of rubber plantations. We once more turned up towards the mountainous area along a valley known as Ulu Langat where there was a large parking space, already filled with many cars of the populace, making the most of the fine and hot week-end. We walked up the winding path skirting the river-bed and it was not long before we met a galaxy of lepidopterous life. Two large Pierids were the dominant feature of the lower end of the Valley. These were *Appias lyncida* Cramer with its brilliant yellow underside, while around high bushes was flying the giant Orange-tip *Hebomoia glaucippe* L. The damp parts of the paths were buzzing with innumerable minute Blues mostly of the genus *Nacaduba* and of species very difficult to distinguish. Henry Barlow had brought a tinful of prawns which had been allowed to putrefy. The aroma was almost overpowering, but they certainly did their work with batches placed at intervals along the path, in attracting many fine species. The *Graphium* were easily lured, in particular *G. sarpedon* L. Some splendid members of the Nymphalidae were equally attracted. Among these was the grand red-brown *Charaxes polyxena* L. and its near relatives *Polyura athamas* Drury and *P. hebe* Butler. The long grass was in some place dancing with several species of the bright yellow *Euremas*. But we were much disturbed at seeing groups of students with long nets catching birdwings and other spectacular species which were eventually to be sold for ornamental purposes, a most reprehensible trade which the authorities are doing their best to suppress. On our way back down the valley we had our first sighting of several male *T. brookiana* with their wonderful flash of iridescent green markings, as they sailed past, occasionally only some six feet from the ground, but always extremely difficult to catch. We motored back to the capital that evening.

My host had invited to dinner Mr "Wickie" Fleming and his wife Alix, both extremely ardent collectors and now undoubtedly the leading residents on Malayan butterflies. Later that evening I motored with them to their home some forty miles to the north at Bukit Rotan where I was able to view

their fine collection comprising some 900 out of the thousand species of butterflies now recorded in Malaya. The following morning their garden was alive with insects, including a large number of the Daniids, especially *Danaus vulgaris* Butler and *Euploea mulciber* Cramer. We left their residence about 8.30 a.m. on the 7th and drove some 35 miles in a north-westerly direction through some grand country till we reached a strip of virgin forest at a spot called Bukit Tarek. A former army road had been driven through this forest tract which still at times harbours tiger and the small Sumatran Rhino. But by an unfortunate oversight the decomposed prawns had been left behind. In spite of this omission we were kept busy stalking the many species that were flying up and down this grand forest road. Some of the most interesting were several species of the Euthalias, a large genus of Nymphalines. Among these were two commoner species *Euthalia iapis* Godart and *E. monina* F. The chief feature of this genus is the marked sexual dimorphism. The males are most handsome with their black forewings and hindwings with a bright blue border. The more sombre females are nearly twice the size of the males and mainly dull grey or brown with a mottling of white flecks. Gliding round much of the undergrowth were several species of Neptis, chiefly *N. hylas* L. which occurs also in Eastern Europe. Another spectacular Nymphaline was *Moduza procris* Cramer looking very like our White Admiral. Two other members of this family worth noting were *Hypolimnias antilope* Cramer which mimics an Euploea. My hosts were also most interested in my capture of a female of *Idrusia nyctelius euploeoides* C. & R. Felder which mimics *Euploea diocletianus* F. It is apparently quite a rare form. Several species of *Graphium* were on the wing, especially *G. evemon* Bdv.

On our way home from this delightful collecting locality we called on Harry Traill at his home on the banks of the local river. I had already met him at the home of Henry Barlow. He showed us his collection, mainly of moths which he was amassing, all taken in the vicinity of his house, and probably with many unknown species among them. Early on the next morning of 8th August the Flemings drove me again from Bukit Rotan under very sultry conditions up to the Gombak Valley, one of the best known collecting grounds in that region, somewhat to the north-east of Kuala Lumpur. The winding road rises steadily to 2,000 ft. We halted by a small villa where we went through the garden leading down to the fast flowing river which ran along the bottom of the forest-clad slopes. Our beat was by the shaded banks of this stream along which my host had placed batches of very aromatic prawns at intervals. It was not long before we saw a *T. brookiana* sailing high above, along the route of the river to be followed by several others, all males. Also skulking among the undergrowth was the Amathusiid *Discophora timora* Westwood. But only a few *Graphium* and *Nacadubas* patron-

ised the prawn patches, which was disappointing. However, as we were about to leave in the afternoon we caught sight of the superb large Nymphaline *Prothoë calydonia* Hewitson of the *Charaxes* group, basking near a tree in the garden of the villa, but it eluded our efforts to catch it. We then made our way a few more miles up the Gombak Valley to the hilly country on the Selangor-Pahang border where there was rather an ancient-looking wayside café, well patronised by the local populace and also by a galaxy of moths that were settled all over the walls and ceilings attracted to strong lights after dark. We spent quite a time boxing and netting as many as possible which included some huge Cossids measuring quite 5 inches in expanse.

Towards evening we made our way a short distance further to the Genting Sempah Tea Estate which had just been acquired by Henry Barlow. It was approached by a grassy track and consisted of a large mansion surrounded by the remains of what were once the tea ridges on the side of a steep hillside, now well overgrown, and the home of many kinds of choice lepidoptera. At dusk we could hear the gibbons crying in the thick forest on the local mountainside. Later that evening we were all treated to a sumptuous meal which Mr Barlow had brought up from his city home, but it was not till the next morning, 9th August, a very hot one, that we were able to appreciate the richness of this spot for butterflies. The grassy herbage in the immediate vicinity of the house was alive with Lycaemids, mostly the sky blue *Jamides celeno* Cramer. The whole garden seemed to harbour a choice selection of this family. At intervals would appear the very elusive *Arhopala* with their cryptic undersides but superb purple or green uppersides. They usually flew singly and were by no means easy to net. We took several species of this big genus, the most local being *Arhopala opalina*, only found so far in that small area of Malaya. The Nymphalines were well to the fore, in particular the *Neptis* and their close relatives the *Parathyma* of which *P. nefte* Cramer was the most numerous species. Near a waterfall we took a male of the magnificent *Polyura delphis* Doubleday, a very large insect with a white upperside, black tips to the wings and six tails. During the morning I walked down the grassy ride and sheltered under a tree to avoid the extreme heat when a *Troides helena* just eluded me to be followed by a *T. brookiana* which came from behind at shoulder height. Among species flying in this wonderful spot was the larger female of *Euthalia dirtea* Fab., black with yellow flecks, also the large Satyrid *Neorina loewii* Doubleday with a large white patch on the hindwings. When I returned to the waterfall, I found the Flemings had had an equally good harvest with their long-handled nets. As I approached them, a huge butterfly swooped low and was easily taken. It was a perfect male of *T. brookiana*.

During the afternoon we repaired to the house for a late

lunch and then began the home journey to Kuala Lumpur, well pleased with our catch. On the way we stopped again at the wayside café and took a lot more moths at rest round the walls. Henry Barlow once more entertained me at his home that night, and early next morning took me to the main railway station where I caught the daytime train on the 250-mile run to Singapore, which I reached in the afternoon of 10th August. Here I was met by Giles Roche and Tom Parker of whose fine collection I saw a portion. We then went on to dine at a local club, after which my hosts drove me to the airport, where I took a plane late that night, which landed me early on the 11th at Darwin, in the Northern Territory of Australia, and its most northerly city.

So ended a most delightful and profitable five days in these wonderful Malayan surroundings. I must express my extreme gratitude to my hosts, Henry Barlow and the Flemings for all their kindness in conducting me to some of the best localities round the capital where we saw nearly a hundred species of butterflies and a large selection of moths of great diversity, as will be noted in the ensuing list of records and observations.

The list that follows embraces almost all the species of butterflies we captured or definitely observed on the wing. It includes a good many names that appear in Mr Batten's list for his visit in 1968, but in it he did not enumerate any *Lycaenidae* or *Hesperiidae*: Localities are given where known. Subspecific names are added in most instances, taken mainly from Corbet and Pendlebury's "Butterflies of the Malay Peninsula" (1956 edition).

PAPILIONIDAE

Trogonoptera brookiana albescens Rothschild. Female seen at Pantai reservoir. Males at Ulu Langat, Gombak Valley and at the Genting Sempah Tea Estate.

Troides helena cerberus C. & R. Felder. At Pantai, Ulu Langat and Tea Estate.

Atrophaneura neptunus Guérin Hénévilla. A scarce species seen only at Bukit Tardi.

Papilio polytes romulus Cramer. Pantai Reservoir.

Papilio memnon agenor L. Only seen at Pantai.

Graphium sarpedon luctatius Fruhstorfer. Seen in all localities.

Graphium evemon eventus Fruhstorfer. Bukit Tarek, Ulu Langat and Gombak.

Graphium bathycles bathycloides Honrath.

PIERIDAE

Leptosia nina malayana Fruhstorfer. Bukit Rotan and Gombak Valley.

Appias lyncida vasava Fruhstorfer. Ulu Langat, Bukit Tarek.

Appias indra plana Butler. Tea Estate only.

Saletara liberia distantia Butler.

Hebomoia glaucippe aturia Fruhstorfer. Ulu Langat, many

seen but not captured.

Valeria valeria lutescens Butler. Bukit Tarek.

Eurema hecabe contubernalis Moore. Generally distributed.

Eurema andersonii Moore. Ulu Langat and Bukit Tarek.

Eurema sari sodalis Moore.

Eurema simulatrix tecmessa Nicéville. Ulu Langat.

Gandaca harina distantii Moore. Panati Reservoir.

DANAIDAE

Danaus aspasia Fab.

Danaus vulgaris macrina Fruhstorfer. Ulu Langat and Bukit Rotan.

Danaus menelaus sinopion Fruhstorfer.

Euploea mulciber Cramer. Pantai, Bukit Rotan, Ulu Langat.

Ideopsis hypermnestra linteata Butler. Pair only seen at Pantai Reservoir.

SATYRIDAE

Neorina lowii neophyta Fruhstorfer. Gentang Sempah Tea Estate.

Ypthima fasciata torone Fruhstorfer. Near Seremban.

Ypthima baldus newbaldi Distant. Tea Estate.

Mycalesis anapita Moore.

Mycalesis fuscum C. & R. Felder.

AMATHUSIIDAE

Discophora timora perakensis STICHEL. Gombak Valley.

Discophora timora perakensis STICHEL. Gombak Valley.

NYMPHALIDAE

Ariadne ariadne L. Bukit Tarek.

Cupha erymanthis lotis Sulzer.

Precis atlites L. Bukit Tarek.

Precis iphita horsfieldi Moore. Ulu Langat.

Symbrenthia anna selangoraha Corbet.

Rhinopalpa polynice eudoxia Guérin-Ménéville. Tea Estate.

Hypolimnias antilope anomala Wallace. Bukit Tarek.

Doleschallia bisaltide pratipa C. & R. Felder. Bukit Tarek.

Cyrestis nivea nivalis C. & R. Felder. Bukit Tarek.

Vindula arsinoe erotella Butler. Bukit Tarek.

Phalantha alcippe alcesta Corbet.

Cethosia hypsea hypsina C. & R. Felder. Ulu Langat.

Neptis hylas mamaja Butler. Ulu Langat and Bukit Tarek.

Neptis nata cresina Fruhstorfer. Bukit Tarek and Tea Estate.

Neptis duryodana nesia Fruhstorfer. Bukit Tarek and Tea Estate.

Parathyma kanwa Moore. Tea Estate.

Parathyma nefte subrata Moore. Tea Estate.

Moduza procris milonia Fruhstorfer. Ulu Langat.

Lebadea martha malayana Fruhstorfer. Bukit Tarek.

Euthalia iapis puseda Moore. Bukit Tarek.

Euthalia monina Fab. Bukit Tarek.

Euthalia dirtea dirteana Corbet. Tea Estate, female only.

Idrusia nyctelius euploeoides C. & R. Felder. Bukit Tarek, female only.

(to be continued)